

Dear Dad,

So, it's been a year. It's been a weird year. Not just for me, though it is strange— when I'm not doing anything or when I see something you might have found interesting— and almost write you a text or give you a call. But it's also been a weird year for the world. Some lives began, and others ended. In some parts of the world war started, and in others peace willed out. There was sorrow, there was hope; love and hate; there was failure and there was progress. These things happen every year, but this year— this year you weren't around to share in it. And, well, that's weird. I know, this time last year I was short on words: we all were. But now, a year later— a year without you— I have some things I'd like to say.

First, I want to say that I miss you. Your family misses you. Your friends miss you. And your country misses you. And we all should. Taught in class on the Mall, where you minored in tear gas, and on the zoo plane with the McGovern campaign, and on the campaign trail with the countless clients you helped to elect, you learned first-hand the spirit, grit, and resilience individuals must summon to create real, lasting change. And through all of your strengths and your weaknesses, you were also able to conjure a genius that changed the direction of this nation and the lives of millions of people for the better: through your writing, and your resolve, and your vision, and your relentless determination. You were truly a once-in-a-lifetime mind and creative.

I remember one day, calling you stressed from work, not knowing what to do, you told me that if I'm not fired from an incompetent campaign, then I'm not trying hard enough— and that inspired me. It inspired me to always speak my mind, fight for what I believe in, and do what I think is right. And I did. I did this because you had faith in my ability, and empowered me— just like the dozens of political consultants of the next generation who came through your doors, and who you set off into the world to be a force of change. We will forever carry with us the lessons and stories you shared, and we can only hope to one day make the same impact for good on our world that you had. But as much as we may try to emulate you, we can never be you— and that's okay. A very funny yet serious man once said that it is our failure to become our perceived ideal that ultimately defines us and makes us unique. And you loved failure. You told me that without the sting of losing, you never learn the determination to win. I, like all those you inspired and mentored, am grateful for everything you taught me.

As for myself I miss our calls, usually multiple times a day, to talk about whatever we wanted— sometimes, often even, the same things over and over. I still miss your laugh. I still miss your reassurance and your guidance. I still miss your writing and your stories. And I still miss your kind smile and warm glance. I am also incredibly grateful for the memories we shared. Our trip to Ireland together, our countless trips to Key West together, driving to Toronto and exploring museums, you picking me up from kindergarten and taking me to the zoo. I miss dragging you to Sabres games and making you a hockey fan, and you dragging me to Blue Jays, Bisons, and Red Sox games and making me a baseball fan. I think it's safe to say we rubbed off on each other. We challenged the way each other thought, we taught each other new skills, we laughed at

the same jokes, we tapped our feet to the same music. (And you, dad, had an incredible and very wide range taste in music, as I do now.) You taught me how to think of communication, how to view the world, and the power of stories and how to tell them through the lens of a camera. And I taught you new ways of thinking about editing and how people vote.

When we were little, and you were on the road for work, you used to send us emails to tell us where you were and what it was like there. I re-read one of these emails recently, and in it you said the following: “Hi Noah, did you have a good sleep? I miss it when you don’t come wake me up in the morning. And it makes me sad to be away from you. But daddy always comes home, and when I do, I am so much happier to be with you. I am in Indiana. There are lots of farms where I am– they grow corn and soybeans, and raise cattle and especially pigs, and there are some chickens and sheep. I grew up in a small town a lot like East Aurora, but in farm country in a state called Iowa that’s a lot like where I am right now. I would like to show you the place I grew up some day... I miss you very much and I can’t wait until I get home tonight so I can give you big hugs.”

In that spirit, I want to close by saying this: Hi dad. I slept well, and I hope you’re sleeping well too; you did a lot of work while you were here with us, and you deserve it. But don’t rest too long now, we still need your spirit of strength to continue your work for progress. It won’t come easy: progress is hard, relentless work. I’m in Washington, DC now. There are lots of politicians here—some good, some bad. And there are lots of consultants here—mostly bad. It’s nothing like where we grew up– and thank you for showing me where you grew up– but I, like you when you lived here in DC, am slowly working out where I belong and how I fit in. It’ll take some time, but I am sure one day soon I will get where I need to be. Now, I know this time you aren’t coming home. And that’s okay. Deep down I knew, in this case, your always wouldn’t be forever. We will learn, slowly, how to continue without you around. That, after all, is the cycle of life. I miss you very much every day, but there’s so much left to do here before we are reunited. And when we are, we can have a glass of bourbon, and catch up, and reminisce, and share a big hug. You are my dad, and I am your son— and until that day we see each other again, it will always be that way. Our relationship that does not require past tense. True love never does.